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the great marine-painters, of drawing the forms of water, whether a river like the Thames is chosen, or the restless sea, with its smooth surface or its curling billows. Some of the best of Whistler's work in etching that preserves studies of quaint places that either have, or soon will have, disappeared, and but for these etchings would be forgotten, are 'The London Bridge,' 'The Little Limehouse,' 'Billingsgate,' 'Hungerford Bridge,' 'Thames Police,' and 'Black Lion Wharf.' In these, at least, his art has shown qualities that compel admiration."

I have given this budget of opinions that the reader may not merely have my own views, but that he may enjoy the benefit of different judgments and of different viewpoints. Other witnesses to Whistler's pre-eminence as an etcher might be cited, but those adduced will suffice. Whatever be the ultimate judgment as to Whistler the man and as to Whistler the painter, lithographer, and teacher, it is scarcely to be entertained that the decision of future generations as to his pre-eminence as an etcher will differ materially from that of to-day. In the same breath the work of no other modern etcher is to be mentioned with Whistler's save only that of Seymour Haden, and the etchings of these two artists are so unlike as scarcely to make comparison permissible. The name of Whistler as an etcher has been linked with that of Rembrandt. It is a compliment merited by achievement, and if everything else Whistler has done save his etchings be forgotten, it is safe enough to say his fame will be secure for all time.

FREDERICK W. MORTON.



JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER, THE PAINTER

The death of James McNeill Whistler recalls a prophecy by Sheridan Ford, which I remember seeing some years ago in the *Galignani Messenger* of Paris. Said that clever versifier, who was more appreciative of Whistler's genius than many of the critics:

"For many years the prints of London Town
Have treated 'Jimmie' Whistler as a clown,
While Yankee journals tailed the cockney van
And showed him as a snobbish, vain old man.
He's all of that; but he is something more,
And years to be his prestige shall restore.
When 'Jimmie' sleeps beneath the daisied sod—
In peace at last with man if not with God—
Then we'll forget the 'Jimmie' whom we know,
The vulgar 'Jimmie' posed for public show,
Who proves in ways at war with wit and art
That workers and their work are things apart."

There is certainly much in Whistler's career that his best friends and most ardent admirers would wish to forget; but, as Ford prophesies,

there is much that his bitterest enemies and most zealous detractors will be forced to remember. We may forget the man, but not his work.

Whistler's life was really part and parcel of his art, for to him art was everything—country, religion, his very existence—and if from

want of dignity, lack of practical judgment, or touch of madness, he in the opinion of others, did not deport himself in a way to conform with the majesty of the art he worshiped, it is after all a matter which we should all be willing to excuse, in view of the reforms he inaugurated and the new light he cast on studio practices.

Of his fame there can be no doubt. We will likely forget, as Ford says, the "Jimmie" whom we know," we may even forget his "symphonies" and "arrangements," but we can never forget his art, since, as the forerunner in a movement which is bound to spread and perpetuate itself, his influence will continue to be man-



FUMETTE STANDING

By J. McNeill Whistler

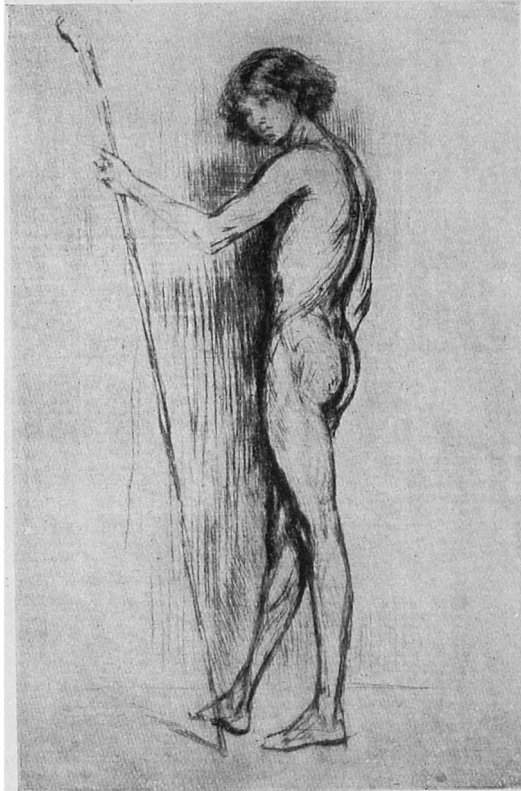
Showing Whistler's Figure-Drawing

ifest in salon and salesroom in a type of pictures superior in refinement and poetic interest to the class of work that obtained before he threw down the gauntlet before the artistic world and won the battle he precipitated.

Like many another gifted worker in a good cause Whistler had his rise and fall, his day of glory and his day of partial obscurity. No

artist of our time achieved greater celebrity; yet he outlived his notoriety. It is true, as was stated a few days after his death, that his fights with the critics, his lawsuits, his quarrels, his debts, at one time the talk of Paris and the scandal of London, had ceased to amuse the world; his witticisms at the last were received with a patient smile, his elaborately composed letters with a weary tolerance. His popular reputation, in short, was subject to the changes that all reputations endure through flux of opinion, and his fame as an artist was affected in like measure. Received at first with indifference, his work was afterwards exalted to the skies, his slightest productions spoken of with awe and reverence by the crew of art-students and amateurs, hero-worshippers whose estimates were based on the greatness of a name. Then the reaction came, and of late there has been a tendency to under-rate, to belittle, and make light of one of the last century's truest artists, one who should not be depreciated.

Perhaps it would be a kindness to attribute the artist's vagaries of speech and action, as some have done, to a touch of madness. Guérin long ago said that genius was "a disease of the nerves," and certainly the eccentricities of art point frequently to neurotic degenerations, to aberrations from the normal, and to symptoms that



FOSCO

By J. McNeill Whistler

Showing Whistler's Figure-Drawing



SYMPHONY IN WHITE, No. III

By J. McNeill Whistler

are "conceived in spleen and born in madness." Whistler is a case in point. His career, as Joseph Smith asserted a decade ago, marked him distinctly as standing among the eccentrics of genius; and which in his splenetic vagaries showed him to be hovering on the borderland of madness.

"While his affections in art, his 'harmonies,' 'symphonies,' and 'arrangements' in blue and gray and gold and green and so on *ad nauseam*," said Smith, "might seem to set him down among the Barnums of art, with the *poseurs* of the æsthetic, Whistler's work shows him to be a man of undoubted genius, a most uncomfortable and irritating genius, perhaps, but still a genius whose brilliancy is flawed by his aggressive egomania. When we have discounted all the theatrical 'isms' in which he frames his art, we are compelled to recognize the fact that he is an artist whose work will live. No ordinary man, no merely artistic charlatan, could make the impression on the age that Whistler has done."

And yet this substratum of worth is what the highest critical authorities in matters of art failed to recognize, and the more the wonder. In London Whistler's work was bitterly attacked and the onslaught was led by Ruskin himself. In "Fors Clavigera," published in 1877, Ruskin said in a venomous manner of a work of his:

"For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of

the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen and heard much of cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."

For this Whistler sued Ruskin for libel. After a trial, which became almost a farce, the artist obtained judgment for one farthing damages, which farthing he at once hung upon his watch-chain. The costs of the action, amounting to nineteen hundred dollars, which fell upon Ruskin, were raised by public subscription.

The fact is that from the outset Whistler's artistic career was dominated by certain convictions which he seriously and earnestly offered to the world—which, it is to be feared, he often gratuitously flouted in the world's face—and which the leading spirits in the world of art at that time were not prepared to accept. Impressionism has been termed the century's most important contribution to art, and in a very vital sense Whistler antedated by six or seven years Manet, Monet, Sisley, Renoir, and the other men who broke away from tradition and sought to paint, not facts, but impressions.



CAPRICE IN PURPLE AND GOLD
By J. McNeill Whistler

A word of biography may here be interjected. Whistler was born in Lowell, Mass. He was the son of Major George W. Whistler, a distinguished United States army officer and civil engineer, and one of the founders of Lowell. The date of his birth is disputed, but is usually placed at 1834. He was the child of his father's second marriage, and the eldest of five sons, but one of whom survives him. This is Dr. William Gibbs McNeill Whistler, a London physician.

Since early childhood Whistler never visited his native city, and at various times when he was having honors bestowed upon him there has been considerable dispute over his birthplace, which is sometimes stated to be St. Petersburg. In St. Anne's Episcopal Church, in Lowell, however, the record of his baptism appears. His early life included a trip to Russia, which accounts for the St. Petersburg fiction, and several years in the West Point Military Academy, from which he was finally dropped.

One of several gifted students at the atelier of Gleyre, in Paris, he was like Claude Monet, August Renoir, and Alfred Sisley, whom, as stated above, he preceded there by six or seven years, in showing no trace whatever of the influence of that academic master. What-



SYMPHONY IN GRAY AND GREEN

By J. McNeill Whistler



CHELSEA IN ICE
By J. McNeill Whistler

ever Gleyre did not do for his pupils, he at least awoke in the freer spirits that mood of rebellion and of self-discovery so essential to individual development.

Whistler's most famous paintings are: "White Girl" (1862); "Coast of Brittany," "Last of Old Westminster," and "Westminster Bridge" (1863); "Princesse des Pays de la Porcelaine" (1865); "At the Piano" (1867); "Portrait of My Mother" (an "Arrangement in Gray and Black"), and portrait of Thomas Carlyle (1872); "Gold Girl," "Nocturne in Blue and Gold," and "Nocturne in Blue and Green" (1878); "Harmony in Gray and Green" (1881); "Nocturne in Blue and Silver," "Blue Girl," and "Entrance to Southampton Water" (1882); "Great Fire Wheel" (1883); "Harmony in Brown and Black" (1884); and "Arrangement in Black" (Lady Archibald Campbell) and "Arrangement in Gray and Green" (Miss Alexander), (1888). One should also remember his portrait of Sarasate.

In 1883 Whistler received his first medal in Paris. In 1889 he was honored by the Paris Association of Fine Arts, in 1895 he obtained the Temple gold medal P. A. F. A., and other medals of honor were bestowed upon him at the Paris exposition in 1900 for painting and engraving. He was also an officer of the Legion of

Honor and honorary member of the Academy of St. Luke, Rome, and likewise an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Bavaria.

So much by way of record of the man's achievement. But what of the achievement itself, what of the lesson he taught to the world of art into which he found himself thrown, what of his ideals, his principles, his struggles, his victories? All these he certainly had, and the motives behind them are more important to the student of art than the facts themselves.

The worth of Whistler's etchings is now a matter of common recognition, and his love and adoption of Japanese art is no less well known. What is the connection between the two and his paintings? His sketchy, suggestive etchings, were accepted because men had grown into the habit of accepting spirited statements in that form, which they were not prepared to do in the form of oil-paintings. But, as a critic aptly put it: First the Japanese, then Whistler, then a multitude of artists; and the world learned the lesson.

Whistler never imitated the Japanese; only learned his lesson from them—witty enough to apply the lesson to oil-paintings, which were Japanese only as regards the basic principle. Nothing could have been more opposed to the English art-doctrines of the time. American art-doctrines? We had, as has been frequently asserted, none then. It was for this reason that Whistler lived in England, it being the only place for such a man, excepting Paris. The American loved his mother tongue too much to make a home in Paris, though he did spend much time there. He never admitted that we had any art love in America. Had he become less enamored of the old country with its hoary picturesqueness and mature ways, this opinion might have been much modified. His love of country was swallowed by his love of art

From the Japanese he learned brevity of statement, the abandonment of tiresome realism, the decorative element rather than realism, the virtues of abstract line, simply for the line's sake, a new sense of color and the virtues of harmony in subduing colors so that the whole picture should be one note, however varied the reds or greens, or what not. And did the artists of other schools not give attention to these great truths? Look at the paintings of Gérôme or Gleyre, his master, or Ingres, the father of them all, a recent reviewer suggests, for an answer. The Barbizon school was working at this problem in its own way, but Whistler struck a new note.

His lesson to colorists was remarkable—color for its own sake. Here again we have the consistent following out of a theory—irrespective of where it brought him, and to the utter confusion of the critics who could not understand him. Candor, it has been urged, should have inspired Whistler to seek admission to exhibitions, as æsthetically Japanese. The influence of Japanese art was just beginning to be felt to the full in the western world when Whistler quitted

academic traditions at Paris. Up to that hour strident promiscuity had been the color vogue in reigning teaching. Glare, luridity were the accents of the schools, but Whistler soon introduced a new régime.

Long unobserved, he finally compelled attention by applying to



HARMONY IN FLESH COLOR AND GREEN
By J. McNeill Whistler

painting the principle of musical composition which elaborates its theme in a single key with briefer contemplation in closely related keys, the modulation being almost imperceptibly accomplished, the result a melodious accord with the main theme. It is true that the vocabulary of one art serves but imperfectly for elucidation of another

art. But all who have seen Whistler's "Symphonies" and who understand music feel that he was conscious of the kinship of his brush-work to music, and that he arose to celebrity on a ladder corresponding to the diatonic scale.

The submission of his color sense to Japanese technique was not less obvious. Glare and luridity were banished from his canvas. Low tones delicately organized into fluent and superb association

became habitual with a genius whose brilliant errancy in art proved to be the most austere Asiatic orthodoxy and whose disdain of western etiquette forced him to deride a continental jury with a letter expressive of his "second-class thanks for a second medal." Whistler was too earnest, too petulant, too conscious of the worth of his own discovery to brook minor honors.

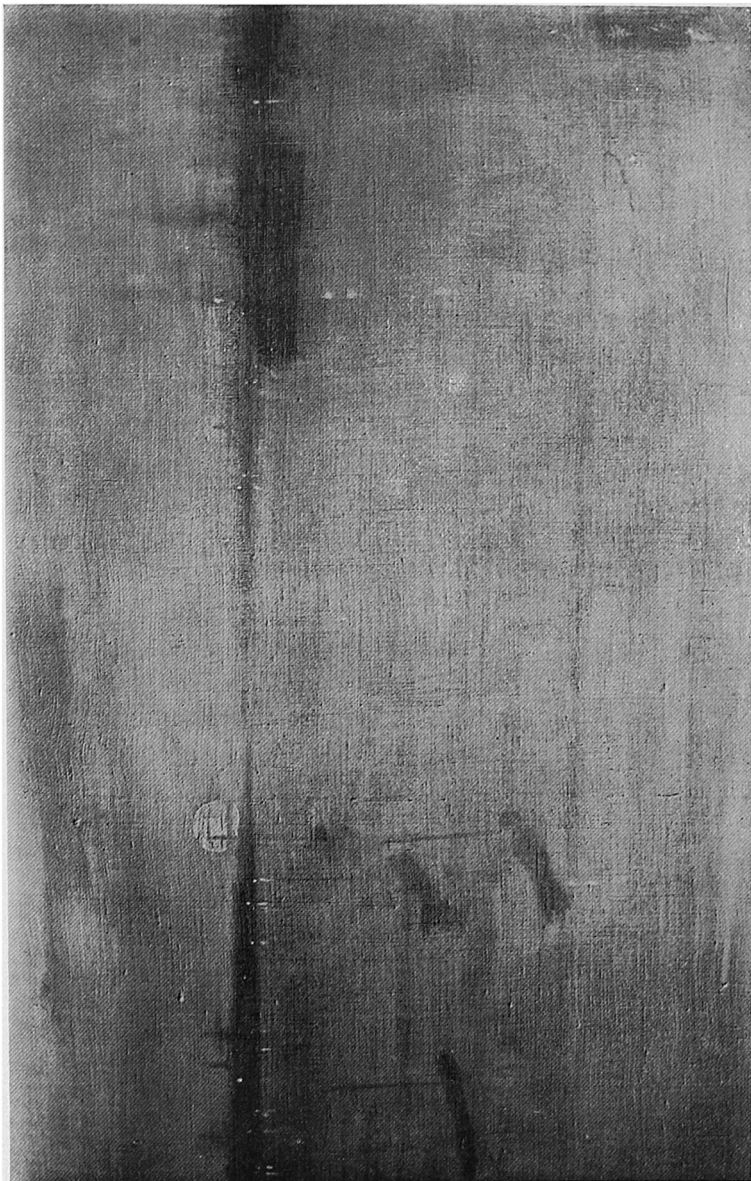
To many this application of the tonic scale of music to painting seemed fanciful, forced, if not unnatural. The public was not prepared for such an innovation. When he gave his compositions such exactly appropriate names as "Nocturne in Green and Carmine," "Symphony in Rose and Gray," and the like, many people thought him affected and merely a clever self-advertiser. But after a time there grew up a realization of what the painter sought to do. For his own ideas, which were almost in-



LITTLE ROSE
By J. McNeill Whistler

variably distinguished by a patrician quality of thought, no matter what the subject, this sensitive vehicle of expression was the only possible one—the only form that could convey the artist's precise meaning.

That Whistler could be robust as well as exquisite was proven by an early figure picture, "The Music Room," while the portrait of Thomas Carlyle, now owned by the corporation of Glasgow, and painted in 1872, when the venerable Scotch fighter was eighty-two years old, represents the most splendidly masculine side of Whistler's art. Even here, however, and with all the roughness and latent energy of Carlyle's temperament fully conveyed, Whistler has gone at the task after his own fashion. Instead of trying to set the man



BATTERSEA
By J. McNeill Whistler



forth by sheer brutality of contrasts—to quote the phrase of a recent reviewer—as a modern Frans Hals might have done, the artist relied upon precisely chosen effects to help voice his impression of the subject

More sensitive, because the theme required it, is his famous “Portrait of My Mother,” one of the glories of the Luxembourg. Painted about twenty-five years ago, it has been ever since regarded as the most poetic and lovable of filial tributes. The picture is too familiar for detailed description; who does not recall that calm, elderly figure seated in profile, with white cap on head and hands folded in lap, embodying the very essence of feminine poise and ripe experience?

Radical as was the step taken by Whistler one is not to regard it as dissociated from his day. An acute student of his work has rightly said that his art “is logically related to realism, to the poetry of the men of 1830, and to the motives of the impressionists, and represents the wider influence of his times in its keen analysis of phenomena and the independently personal bias he has given it; in search for new sensations of the most subtle kind and in a tendency at times to exalt good manners, that is to say style, above the qualities of intrinsic merit.” It is to be doubted, however, if Whistler ever took the trouble to trace a connection between his own art and the art against which he splenored. It suited him better to regard his work as the result of a special revelation to himself, to put his theories into practice and let the multitude think what it choose. Never for an instant was there the shadow of turning from the purity of his devotion to his art. He felt within him the sense of originality in his conceptions of what art should be, and in no moment of weakness did he swerve a hair’s breadth from the straight and narrow way. If this be not “character,” asks an appreciative writer, how will you exemplify it?

“Through poverty, neglect, abuse, contempt, insult, and war he never varied in his demand that mankind should learn the lesson the god of art had set him apart to teach. Did the world learn the lesson? Strange to say, it did. Let him who will scoff at Whistler; it remains true that he revolutionized the point of view of the world. Probably it would be more just to say that he largely did so; because we may not omit to unite with him those others, Manet, Monet, and Degas, all revolutionists. Faith! Art needed it! Things were pretty well crusted over when these men fought the good fight to break through.

“The immensity of the revolution can only be comprehended by those who have given their lives to the study of art movements. Even those who refuse to admit Whistler’s genius are living examples of this change of point of view. They deny Whistler’s while admitting other men’s talent who have built on Whistler’s foundation—though keeping more in the easily understood mannerisms which are not so hard to comprehend.”

WILLIAM F. LOSEE.